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PLANT STUDIES.

THE LABURNUM.



FOREMOST among those trees cultivated for their ornamental appearance, says Mr. George Charles Haité, must be ranked the Laburnum, or "Golden Chain," a fanciful and appropriate name by which it is often called. It is a native of Europe, and is said to have been introduced into England in or about the year 1596. It is now quite common in many of our parks, and is rarely absent from our gardens and shrubberies, where it may be seen during May and June in full bloom, side by side with the delicately tinted and sweet scented Lilac, the soft shell-like pink of the apple blossoms, and the pale white or rich red of the Hawthorn. Under

such conditions, and with a sunny sky overhead, the Laburnum, with its delicate green foliage "rich with streaming gold," as Cowper so eloquently describes its shower of yellow blossoms, is indeed a picturesque object, and presents a most exquisite contrast of color. There are several varieties of the

tree under cultivation, and they differ from the common kind in bearing finer blossoms and more developed foliage.

Its growth is woody and branching, and, the tree often attains to the height of twenty feet and upwards. The wood is barked, and of a warm brown color; the younger shoots are smooth and of a pale green, and are surrounded by rings of bark at their joints with the older wood (Fig. 1).

The flowers are bright saffron yellow in color, with rich reddish-brown markings (Fig. 2). They grow on long stalks in pendulous racemes, at the



FIG. 1.—JOINT OF YOUNG WOOD WITH OLD.

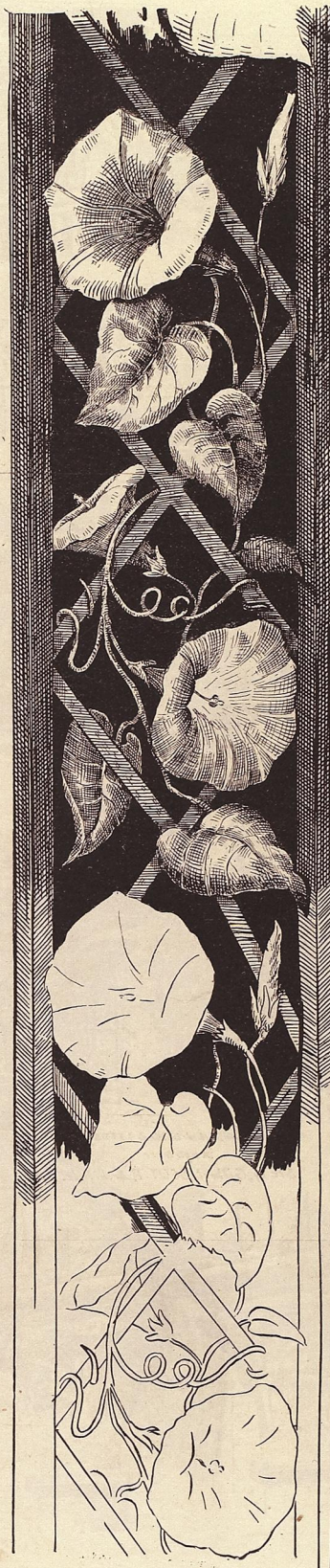
FIG. 2.—BUD AND FLOWERS.

FIG. 3.—LEAF GROWTH.

ends of small lateral shoots; and a number of flowers are attached to delicate stalks, and spring spirally round the main stem. The leaves are three-parted, each acute oblong in form; mid-ribbed, and veined from the centre to the edges. They grow in clusters, on long stalks, around short lateral spurs (Fig. 3), or alternately round the young shoots (see Fig. 1). Their surface is smooth and shining, and in color they are bright green, which becomes much darker when the flower-bearing period is passed.

The interesting growth of the Laburnum could be made very useful and effective for many purposes of decoration, notably in needlework, or in designs for woven silk and other fabrics. In many hand painted decorations its selection would prove judicious. For instance, in fan painting, its growth is very suggestive of the shape to which it would be applied; and the pendulous flower clusters suggest their suitability for the embellishment of spaces that taper towards the base. It is also eminently adapted for bold stencil work.

THE preparation of gold powder for gilding may be carried out by two methods. The first method is as follows: Grind up some gold leaf in a wedgewood ware or marble mortar with a little honey or thick gum water. When the gold leaf is reduced to extremely fine particles wash away the honey or gum by adding clean water to the mixture, stirring and allowing the particles of gold to settle, and then decanting the liquid. The residue of the gold and gum liquid is to be thrown on to a filter paper, and water poured on it until all remaining gum is washed away; the gold powder is allowed to dry on the filter paper and then bottled. The second method is to dissolve pure gold or gold leaf in aqua regia, a mixture of one part concentrated nitric acid to four parts of hydro-chloric acid, the result being a clear liquid of a yellow color. To recover the gold, a piece of copper is to be suspended in the liquid, or a solution of sulphate of iron added, when the gold will be precipitated in a finely divided state.



MORNING GLORIES, BY H. R. DEAN.